



## Public transit gets \$3.7B to woo riders, adopt green fleets

By HOPE YEN

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — As cities seek to fully reopen, public transit systems straining to win back riders after being crushed by the COVID-19 pandemic are getting a big funding boost to stay afloat and invest in new fleets of electric buses. The Biden administration said Monday it was awarding \$2.2 billion in coronavirus relief money from the American Rescue Plan to 35 financially strapped transit agencies in 18 states. The money would be used to prop up day-to-day operations, including staffing and payroll as well as cleaning and sanitization to limit the spread of illness in public transportation. A federal mask mandate for public transit remains in effect until at least March 18.



Vice President Kamala Harris with Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, left, and Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Michael Regan, right, announces major federal actions that will expand clean public transit and school buses, reduce emissions from diesel trucks, and create good-paying jobs, at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House complex, in Washington, Monday, March 7, 2022.

Continued on next page

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**Continued from Front**

Another \$1.5 billion in grants will be made available under President Joe Biden's infrastructure law — a total of \$7.5 billion over five years — for transit agencies to purchase low- or no-emission buses made by U.S. workers and to build bus facilities. That's more than double the combined amount from the previous year.

The cash infusion comes as mask requirements and other COVID-19 restrictions are fading in much of the U.S. With many workers beginning a return to offices, the administration sees an opportunity to promote zero-emission transit as families reestablish new commuting routes to work and school.

Transit agencies as well are seeking ways to boost ridership. Many, from Washington D.C. to Boston and Chicago, have slashed prices or offered free fares to attract suburban commuters and better serve lower-income communities more dependent on public transportation. Others are adjusting bus and subway routes to offer less service during traditional workday rush-hour periods in favor of more trips at other times of the day for people seeking medical care or traveling to sports and entertainment events.

"Our transportation sector has reached a turning point," said Vice President Kamala Harris, who has pushed the need for electric school buses and unveiled Monday's actions at



**Tulsa Transit General Manager Ted Rieck boards a new electric bus on Aug. 3, 2021 in Tulsa, Okla. Tulsa Transit has 4 new electric buses in their fleet.**

the White House.

"We can clean our air and protect the health of our children," she said. "We can connect all of our communities with affordable, accessible and reliable public transportation. We can address the climate crisis and grow our economy at the same time."

Harris was joined by Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan. They also announced proposed stronger pollution regulations for new tractor-trailer rigs that would clean up smoky diesel engines as well as \$17 million in funding for school districts to buy electric zero-emission and low-emission school buses. The emissions can cause respiratory problems in humans.

Buttigieg said public transit is a key component to reducing air pollution, describing it as win-win because it is affordable for commuters and also reduces congestion on the roads. The administration has also been pushing electric vehicles to replace gas-powered cars. Transportation, mostly from car and truck tailpipe emissions, is the biggest U.S. contributor to global warming.

"We're making the largest ever investment in this program for buses and bus facilities, helping to deliver better commutes and cleaner air to American communities," Buttigieg said.

Transit agencies will have until May to apply for the Transportation Department's grants, which will be awarded by fall. About 5%

of the money must also be used for workforce training to help transit workers prepare for the technological change.

Transit systems have already begun moving in the direction of electric buses. California has committed to all-electric bus fleets by 2040, as well as New York City and Boston. Washington, D.C., has set a target of 2045.

The effort comes at a challenging time for public transit.

Only about 55% of transit riders nationwide have returned compared with pre-pandemic times, according to the American Public Transportation Association. The biggest losses have been in commuter rail systems serving white-collar suburbanites traveling to downtown workplaces. As COVID-19 cases decline, Biden has urged Americans to shed remote work, describing a return to offices as necessary to boost economic growth.

"It's time for America to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again with people," Biden said in his State of the Union

address. Among the recipients of COVID-19 relief funds Monday were big-city transit systems that had been hit hard from revenue losses due to decreased ridership. New York City's transit system, the nation's largest, garnered \$769 million to steady its operations, while San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit got \$270 million to bolster service and safety protocols.

Others receiving grants were the Washington, D.C., metro system at \$120 million as it anticipates a return of federal employees to offices and Houston's public transit at \$137 million, which has significantly added rapid transit bus lines.

"These funds are crucial to avoid drastic service cuts and layoffs that would damage the economy and public health," said Nuria Fernandez, head of the Federal Transit Administration, which oversees the grants.

At the start of the pandemic, transit agencies cut payroll and slashed services. That came even as essential workers, who are disproportionately nonwhite and lower income, continued to rely on public transportation to get to work. But three rounds totaling nearly \$70 billion in federal COVID-19 emergency assistance, including \$30.5 billion that Biden signed into law last year, pulled transit agencies from the brink of financial collapse.

Paul P. Skoutelas, president of the American Public Transportation Association, praised the latest infusion of federal funds as vital to keeping workers connected to their offices. He said the money will allow transit systems "to re-evaluate routes and service plans, address equity issues and place more alternative fuels vehicles on the road to help address our global climate crisis." □



# White House: Congress must act soon to replenish COVID funds

By ZEKE MILLER

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. will soon begin to run out of money to bolster COVID-19 testing supplies and to guarantee that uninsured Americans keep getting free treatment for the virus unless Congress swiftly approves more funding, the White House warned.

Nearly a year after passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, the administration says the federal government has nearly used up the money dedicated directly to COVID-19 response. More money from Congress is urgently needed to buy antibody treatments, preventative therapy for the immunocompromised and to fund community testing sites, officials say.

"From the COVID side, the bank account is empty," said COVID-19 deputy coordinator Natalie Quillian. "We're in conversations with lawmakers about how to secure the funding, but it's urgently needed." Some of the consequences could be felt later this month.

The White House last month told Congress it was preparing to seek \$30 billion for the virus response, but cut that to \$22.5 billion in a formal request earlier this week that officials said includes only the most critical



White House press secretary Jen Psaki speaks during a press briefing at the White House, Friday, March 4, 2022.

Associated Press

needs. It's being coupled with a \$10 billion request to provide support to Ukraine and its people after Russia's invasion.

"This is an urgent request and this is what is at stake in our fight against COVID," press secretary Jen Psaki said on Friday.

This month, the White House warns, COVID-19 testing manufacturers will begin to slow production of at-home rapid tests unless the federal government signs contracts to buy more. Of-

officials say that could result in a supply crunch should there be another surge in cases.

They also said the Health Resources and Services Administration will be forced to begin winding down claims for COVID-19 treatment for uninsured people this month if Congress doesn't provide more money. Moreover, the U.S. government supply of monoclonal antibodies would run out in May. And in July, supplies of the AstraZeneca

prophylactic injection that can prevent serious illness in immunocompromised individuals would go dry. By September, the U.S. would run out of supplies of an oral anti-viral pill.

"Given how costly COVID has been with so many of our fellow Americans hospitalized or dying, and our daily lives disrupted, we simply cannot afford to wait on investing now and keeping people protected," said Psaki.

The request also includes

funding to support U.S. vaccine purchases and global vaccine distribution.

The U.S. has enough shots of the Pfizer vaccine for children under age 5, should it be approved in the coming weeks. But if regulators make it a three-dose vaccine regimen, the administration would need more money to buy additional doses. The same would also be true if regulators determine that kids aged 5-11 should receive booster shots.

The White House emphasized that the federal government must sign contracts for drugs and vaccines months before they're needed, so Congress must act now to prevent any gaps.

Some Republicans have expressed sticker shock at Biden's request, pressing the administration to repurpose other relief funding that hasn't been spent.

"Oh no, that's too much," Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby, top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said Thursday when asked about the administration's \$22.5 billion request. "And secondly, we want to see how much money is out there" that hasn't been spent yet from previously approved COVID-19 relief measures. □

# UC Berkeley declines group's offer to admit 1K more students

**BERKELEY, Calif. (AP)** — A group of residents that successfully challenged the University of California, Berkeley to limit its undergraduate enrollment offered to allow 1,000 additional students in the upcoming academic year. But the university declined, saying enrollment decisions are not up to "a small group of litigants."

Save Berkeley Neighborhoods said in a statement that it would agree to a temporary or partial stay of Thursday's state Supreme Court ruling to freeze next fall's enrollment at 2020-21 levels, meaning the prestigious public university must accept about 3,000 fewer students than planned.

The ruling was a victory for the group, which argued that UC Berkeley has failed to address the effect of increased student enrollment on housing, homelessness, traffic and noise. Supporters of the university lamented that the lawsuit was dashing the dreams of thousands of students.

In the statement made public Saturday, Save Berkeley's Neighborhoods offered to allow the university to enroll 1,000 more students provided 90% of them are California residents and if the University of California ends its effort to stop fighting the enrollment cap through the courts and state Legislature.

The group's representa-

tives said they were "willing to enter into settlement talks based on the principle that enrollment growth can only take place with no further pressure on the City of Berkeley's housing market." However, UC Berkeley spokesperson Dan Mogulof told The San Francisco Chronicle that enrollment decisions in the UC system are made by elected representatives in California — including the governor, the UC Board of Regents and the office of the UC president. He said that university officials "will not provide a small group of litigants with the ability to tell the University of California how many students to enroll."

The university plans to pres-



Students walk on the University of California, Berkeley campus in Berkeley, Calif., on Aug. 15, 2017.

Associated Press

ent its case before the Court of Appeals this summer. In the meantime, it said it will comply with the court order and try to keep

prospective students by increasing online enrollment and asking some to delay enrollment until January 2023. □

# Pentagon to shut down leaking fuel tank facility in Hawaii

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Defense Department will permanently shut down the Navy's massive fuel tank facility in Hawaii that leaked petroleum into Pearl Harbor's tap water, and will remove all the fuel, The Associated Press has learned. A senior defense official said the decision, which Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made Monday, is based on a new Pentagon assessment, but also is in line with an order from Hawaii's Department of Health to drain fuel from the tanks at the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility. The tanks, built into the side of a mountain during World War II to protect them from enemy attack, had leaked into a drinking water well and contaminated water at Pearl Harbor homes and offices.

Nearly 6,000 people, mostly those living in military housing at or near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam were sickened, seeking treatment for nausea, headaches, rashes and other ailments. And 4,000 military families were forced out of their homes and are in hotels.

The defense official said Austin was speaking with Hawaii government leaders on Monday to inform them of the decision, which he believes will protect the



**In this Dec. 23, 2021, photo provided by the U.S. Navy, Rear Adm. John Korka, Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), and Chief of Civil Engineers, leads Navy and civilian water quality recovery experts through the tunnels of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, near Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.**

population and the environment, and will also lay the groundwork for a more secure military fueling system.

The military, which has relied in part on fuel from the Hawaii tanks, will now move to a more dispersed fueling system for military ships and aircraft in the Indo-Pacific. Based on the new assessment, the expanded system will be more cost effective and provide greater security by spreading the fuel supply more broadly across the region, said the official, who

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a decision not yet made public.

The new plan, laid out in recommendations delivered to Austin by a study group, would increase the fuel contracts that the U.S. has with other territories and nations in the Indo-Pacific, and add several more fueling ships that are based at sea. There are currently about a dozen fueling ships, and several more would have to be built.

An assessment team that had been studying how to make the tanks safe to

operate, will now shift and determine how to shut the tanks down and remove the fuel in an environmentally safe way. The team must report back to Austin by the end of April with recommendations.

The official said that once steps are taken to ensure the tanks can be safely emptied, the defueling will begin. It is expected to take about a year, so the entire process could be finished some time next year. Austin has asked the Navy secretary to plan a budget for all necessary corrective

action for any prior releases from the facility.

The tanks can hold 250 million gallons of fuel, and they are at less than half capacity right now.

The giant U.S. government fuel storage installation, which has provided fuel to military ships and planes crisscrossing the Pacific Ocean since World War II, was a secret for years. The 20 fuel tanks were built into the mountain ridge to protect them from aerial attacks. Each tank is about the height of a 25-story building and can hold 12.5 million gallons (47.3 million liters.)

The tanks are connected to underground pipelines that send fuel about 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) to Pearl Harbor and to ships and planes used by the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and Navy.

The Navy hasn't determined how petroleum got in the water. Officials are investigating a theory that jet fuel spilled from a ruptured pipe last May and somehow entered a fire suppression system drain pipe. They suspect fuel then leaked from the second pipe on Nov. 20, sending it into the drinking water well.

Once the leak was discovered, Hawaii state officials and members of Congress immediately began to demand the facility be shut down. □

**Associated Press**

# Boat carrying Haitian migrants grounds off the Florida Keys



**This photo provided by the United States Border Patrol shows a boat that ran aground in the Florida Keys off Key Largo on Sunday, March 6, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

**KEY LARGO, Fla. (AP)** — A wooden boat carrying hundreds of Haitian migrants in a suspected human smuggling operation ran aground in shallow water in the Florida Keys, where 163 people swam ashore and many needed medical attention, federal authorities said. The boat teeming with people listed sharply to its side near Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, not far from where another boat carrying 176 Haitians was stopped in January.

Many of the migrants were in need of medical attention, according to a tweet sent by U.S. Customs and

Border Protection Chief Agent Walter N. Slosar on Sunday night.

The U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies rushed to help the group of migrants, which included women and children.

"Multiple agencies responded quickly & worked closely to protect a lot of lives today," U.S. Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Jason Neiman tweeted Sunday night.

It was not immediately know how many people were taken to hospitals. Coast Guard images at the scene showed a large group of Haitians draped in

towels on the shore.

Border Patrol officials said human smuggling is suspected and an investigation is continuing.

In the past week, the Coast Guard has stopped two other Haitian boats navigating near the Bahamas with dozens of migrants.

On Feb. 28, crews spotted a Haitian sailboat with 179 people aboard 30 miles (50 kilometers) off Andros Island, Bahamas. Last Friday, the Coast Guard stopped another Haitian sail vessel with 123 people, including 39 minors about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from Anguilla Cay, Bahamas. □

## Russia snubs U.N. court hearings in case brought by Ukraine

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP)** — Ukraine pleaded with the United Nations' top court Monday to order Russia to halt its devastating invasion, saying Moscow is already committing widespread war crimes and "resorting to tactics reminiscent of medieval siege warfare" in its 12-day-old military onslaught. Russia snubbed the International Court of Justice hearings and its seats in the Great Hall of Justice remained empty.

On a lawn outside the court's headquarters, the Peace Palace in The Hague, a protester placed colored candles spelling out the words: "Putin Come out." A small group of protesters holding Ukrainian flags chanted antiwar slogans outside the building's gates. Ukrainian representative Anton Korynevych told judges at the International Court of Justice: "Russia must be stopped and the court has a role to play in stopping it."

Ukraine has asked the court to order Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations" launched Feb. 24 "that have as their stated purpose and objective the prevention and punishment of a claimed genocide" in the separatist eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk.

Lawyers for Kyiv dismissed the Russian claim.

"Ukraine comes to this



Candles are set in the grass with the text 'Putin Come Out' in front of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, Monday, March 7, 2022.

court because of a grotesque lie and to seek protection from the devastating consequences of that lie," David Zions told the court. "The lie is the Russian Federation's claim of genocide in Ukraine. The consequences are unprovoked aggression, cities under siege, civilians under fire, humanitarian catastrophe and refugees fleeing for their lives."

A decision on Ukraine's request is expected within days. The court's president, American judge Joan E. Donoghue, said the judges would issue a decision "as soon as possible."

If the court were to order a

halt to fighting as Ukraine requested, "I think the chance of that happening is zero," said Terry Gill, a professor of military law at the University of Amsterdam. He noted that if a nation does not abide by the court's order, judges could seek action from the United Nations Security Council, where Russia holds a veto. Donoghue said Russia's ambassador to the Netherlands, Alexander Shulgin, informed judges that "his government did not intend to participate in the oral proceedings."

Because of Russia's refusal to participate in the hearings, Moscow's turn to pres-

ent legal arguments on Tuesday was canceled.

Korynevych condemned Moscow's snub.

"The fact that Russian seats are empty speaks loudly," he said. "They are not here in this court of law. They are on a battlefield waging aggressive war against my country."

The request for so-called provisional measures is linked to a case Ukraine has filed based on the Genocide Convention. Both countries have ratified the 1948 treaty, which has a clause allowing nations to take disputes based on its provisions to the Hague-based court.

"Ukraine emphatically denies that any such genocide has occurred, and that the Russian Federation has any lawful basis to take action in and against Ukraine for the purpose of preventing and punishing genocide," the country said in its claim to the court. Even before the hearing, Donoghue sent a message to Russia's foreign minister on March 1 pressing home the necessity to act "in such a way as will enable any order the Court may make on the request for provisional measures to have its appropriate effects."

Jonathan Gimblett, a member of Ukraine's legal team, highlighted the urgency of Ukraine's case, saying Moscow's "military aggression could have resulted in a new nuclear catastrophe affecting not only Ukraine or Russia, but potentially a vast surrounding area."

He added that Russia, "today is resorting to tactics reminiscent of medieval siege warfare, encircling cities, cutting off escape routes and pounding the civilian population with heavy ordnance."

The success of Ukraine's request will depend on whether the court accepts it has "prima facie jurisdiction" in the case, which is not a guarantee that the court ultimately would proceed with the suit. □

Associated Press

## Syria: 2 civilians killed in Israeli airstrike near Damascus



In this photo released by the Syrian official news agency SANA, people inspect damage after an Israeli airstrike near Damascus, Syria, Monday, March 7, 2022.

Associated Press

**DAMASCUS, Syria (AP)** — Israel fired several missiles toward Syrian military positions near the capital of Damascus Monday, killing two civilians and causing material damage, Syria's defense ministry said. It was the first Israeli attack inside Syria since Russia, a key backer of President Bashar Assad, invaded Ukraine.

The Syrian defense ministry said Israeli warplanes flying over neighboring Lebanon fired the missiles toward Syria, adding that Syrian air defenses shot down most of the missiles.

It gave no further details or say how the civilians were killed.

Israel did not comment on the attack and rarely acknowledges such operations. But it has launched hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of Syria during its past decade of civil war.

Israel relies on Russia for security coordination in Syria, where Russia has a strong military presence, pushing Israel's prime minister to search for middle ground between Russia

and Ukraine. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has also assumed the unlikely role of mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

Monday's attack was the first since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sparking the current war.

On that same day, three Syrian soldiers were killed in an Israeli attack near Damascus.

Israel says that its strikes inside Syria target bases of Iran-allied militias, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, that fight on the side of Assad's forces. □

# China calls Russia its chief 'strategic partner' despite war

By **KEN MORITSUGU**

**BEIJING (AP)** — China's foreign minister on Monday called Russia his country's "most important strategic partner" as Beijing continues to refuse to condemn the invasion of Ukraine despite growing pressure from the U.S. and European Union to use its influence to rein Moscow in.

Wang Yi said Chinese ties with Moscow constitute "one of the most crucial bilateral relationships in the world."

China has broken with the U.S., Europe and others that have imposed sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. Beijing has said sanctions create new issues and threaten a political settlement of the conflict.

"No matter how perilous the international landscape, we will maintain our strategic focus and promote the development of a comprehensive China-Russia partnership in the new era," Wang said at a news conference on the sidelines of the annual meeting of China's ceremonial parliament. "The friendship between the two peoples is iron clad," he added.

Much attention has been paid to a meeting between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing on Feb. 4, after which a joint state-



**Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks during a remote video press conference held on the sidelines of the annual meeting of China's National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing, Monday, March 7, 2022.**

ment was issued affirming "strong mutual support for the protection of their core interests."

Russia said it endorses China's view of self-governing Taiwan as an "inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan," while China backed Russia in opposing the further enlargement of NATO.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has drawn comparisons to China's own threat to invade Taiwan to bring what it considers a wayward province under its control.

However, Wang said Taiwan was a "fundamentally different" issue from Ukraine because the island is "an inalienable part of China's territory."

"Some people, while being vocal about the principle of sovereignty on the Ukraine issue, have kept undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity on the Taiwan question. This is a blatant double standards," Wang said in a less-than-subtle dig at Taiwan ally the U.S.

China and Russia have increasingly aligned their

foreign policies against the liberal Western order and their militaries have carried out exercises together and flown joint air patrols, as their relationship has taken on the trappings of an informal alliance. Wang accused the U.S. on Monday of trying to create an Asian version of NATO.

Xi's government has refused to criticize the Russian invasion but tried to distance itself from Putin's war by calling for dialogue and the respect of national sovereignty. That prompted suggestions that Putin

failed to tell the Chinese leader his plans before their February statement.

Along with denouncing trade and financial sanctions on Moscow, Beijing says Washington is to blame for the conflict for failing to take Russia's security concerns into consideration. During an hour-long phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday, Wang said China opposes any moves that "add fuel to the flames" in Ukraine.

Wang said China hopes the fighting will stop as soon as possible and called for negotiations to resolve the immediate crisis, as well as talks on creating a balanced European security mechanism. He said the U.S. and Europe should pay attention to the negative impact of NATO's eastward expansion on Russian security.

On a visit to the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius on Monday, Blinken said China's actions were at odds with its avowed support for stability and "respecting sovereignty."

Blinken was speaking at a news conference with his Lithuanian counterpart, whose country has come under severe economic pressure from Beijing after it agreed to allow Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in Vilnius. □

**Associated Press**

# Moderna signs with Kenya for first mRNA facility in Africa



**An airport worker stands next to boxes of Moderna coronavirus vaccine, donated by the U.S. government via the COVAX facility, after their arrival at the airport in Nairobi, Kenya on Aug. 23, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — Moderna signed a memorandum of understanding with Kenya's government on Monday for the drug-maker's first mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility in Africa, the company said.

The goal is to produce up to 500 million doses of vaccines a year for the African continent, Moderna said in a statement. The focus is on drug substance manufacturing, it said, though the facility could be expanded to include fill-and-finish work.

"In parallel, Moderna is also working on plans to allow it to fill doses of its COVID-19 vaccine in Africa as early

as 2023, subject to demand," the company said. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the huge need for vaccine manufacturing on the African continent, which remains the least-vaccinated region in the world against the coronavirus.

The continent relies on imports for about 99% of its vaccine needs, the World Health Organization has said.

Frustrated by richer nations' vaccine hoarding, African leaders joined together to pursue the goal of bringing more vaccine manufacturing to the continent of 1.3 billion people.

In October, Senegal and Rwanda signed an agreement with BioNTech for the construction of its first start-to-finish factories to make messenger RNA vaccines in Africa.

The novel mRNA process uses the genetic code for the spike protein of the coronavirus and is thought to trigger a better immune response than traditional vaccines.

Scientists hope the technology, which is easier to scale up than traditional vaccine methods, might ultimately be used to make vaccines against other diseases, including malaria. □

# Abortion access still difficult after historic Mexico ruling

By **FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ**

Associated Press

**MEXICO CITY (AP)** — Six months after Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that criminalizing abortion was unconstitutional, a hospital in the southern state of Guerrero refused to perform an abortion on a 9-year-old rape victim.

The case is a recent example of what abortion advocates warned of after the high court's ruling last year: until each state reforms its penal code there will continue being obstacles to safe and legal abortions in much of the country.

It was only after the Guerrero girl's case drew media attention and lawmakers and activists intervened that Guerrero's health secretary cleared the way for her abortion last month.

Guerrero is one of Mexico's 26 states where changes have still not been made to state legal codes following the Supreme Court ruling in September. In January three state lawmakers submitted a proposed bill to do just that.

The girl's case roiled Guerrero in February. The girl from a remote mountain community was raped by a family member, who is also a minor.

Her grandparents and an aunt went to the state prosecutor's office and then to a hospital in Chilpancingo, the state capital. Doctors there refused, noting that she was more than 12 weeks pregnant and it could risk her health, an assertion advocates disputed.

The refusal became a polemic in the state.

The Roman Catholic Church, which remains influential in Guerrero, voiced objections to the girl having an abortion.

Rev. Salvador Rangel Mendoza, bishop for the Chilpancingo-Chilapa diocese, said it shouldn't have been allowed, because life must be respected. He said the state's health secretary "committed a murder."

Rangel Mendoza noted "sociocultural circumstances" that lead to sexual abuse within families.



**Women hold an abortion-rights demonstration on the Day for Decriminalization of Abortion, one with a sign that reads in Spanish "Neither dead nor imprisoned," left, in Mexico City, Sept. 28, 2021. Associated Press**

"They go against an innocent creature, and why not against the person who impregnated her? Where is that person? He's going to continue impregnating girls."

Authorities opened an investigation, but advocates involved in the case said the other minor was not in custody.

Guerrero ranks high in Mexico for cases of sexual abuse, feminicides and teen pregnancy. Gender violence alerts have twice been declared in the state, triggering a mechanism to protect women's human rights. But in remote mountain communities, there is little government presence. "There is a lot of resistance in institutions that have the obligation to attend to family and sexual violence against women," said Marina Reyna Aguilar, executive director of the Guerrero Association Against Violence toward Women. Advocates say they've documented at least eight cases of girls and women, including one with a disability, who were denied abortions in the state in recent months after being raped.

Neil Arias Vitinio, legal advisor for the nongovernmental Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Center, said the issue is complicated in Guerrero due to institu-

tional apathy, widespread impunity and absence of legislation. She said the girl's case was an example of those forces at play.

Authorities only took notice because the case gained traction in the press, she said.

Most of the time cases never receive widespread attention and the victims' rights are trampled because they occur in remote, poor communities where "nobody listens to them."

Beatriz Mojica, a state lawmaker who got involved in the girl's case, said "it is a serious problem." She said decriminalizing abortion in the state codes was urgent because there are rape victims currently jailed, accused of terminating their pregnancies.

One such case was that of a 23-year-old woman from the Arcelia township. She was raped, but has been jailed for six months, accused of murder after suffering a miscarriage.

"We mustn't as a society allow that our girls are in this vulnerable situation," Mojica said. "We have made and we continue making calls for lawmakers to do what we're supposed to do, our responsibility is to guarantee the non-criminalization of our girls, teens and women."

Mojica, along with law-

makers Gloria Citlali Calixto and Nora Velázquez, all of the ruling National Regeneration Movement party, proposed legislation in mid-January that would decriminalize abortion in the state's penal code up to 12 weeks. That would be in line with similar laws in Mexico City, Hidalgo, Oaxaca,

Veracruz, Baja California and Colima. The legislation remains in committee. Velázquez said that shortly after filing the bill, public criticism flowed from politicians and activists opposed to abortion. The sponsors also received threats through social media.

She hoped the attention garnered by the girl's case would spur the state legislature to reform the penal code this year. "We legislate for those who are suffering in their communities," Velázquez said.

"We aren't promoting (abortion), we support legislation for the right to health, to justice, to human development."

Ricardo Cano, an adviser for the National Front for the Family, which opposes abortion, said he objects to using the girl's case to push for expanding access to abortions. He said passing such a legal reform "will leave the girls more vulnerable than ever."

"To really eradicate the problem, you have to go after the victimizers, go after the rapists," he said. □

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## March 8<sup>th</sup>

### The evolution of the elderly women of Aruba

**From living with kerosene light to choosing movies on Netflix. From walking with pargati, to speaking with grandchildren face to face through a smartphone. This is what the grandmas of Aruba have experienced in a relatively short period.**

Today, on International Women's Day we focus on the contribution of the generation of women whom we consider today as 'elderly people'. But the group is very diverse, some with more challenges than others. But they all have something in common. They all experienced rapid development, of culture, perception, among other because of technology which brings about lots of change. The generation of Aruban women who were born during and after Second World War saw their position in Aruba evolve from housekeepers to working professionals. A large portion of this generation became the first group of Aruban women who went to school and made a career for themselves, be it as teacher, office worker, sales staff. With this change, a lot in this generation also made the choice to have less children, but continued facing the responsibility of being the ones who had to raise their children, many times on their own. But it is from this group that the activists were born for the bettering of society and equal rights.

The same way they saw technology develop, this group of Aruban women are now enjoying retirement developed from only being a grandma who is always at home to take care of her grandchildren or even great-grandchildren. Those who reached advanced age with good health are ladies who are very conscious of where they come from and how much potential their daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters have, thanks in part to their own effort. And they are women who still aspire to more knowledge, and as such, are even willing to learn how to use a 'smart phone', because to stop growing is not an option for them.

Illustrative Picture: Maria Francisca Jose-Pimentel, known as 'Chica' (91) who for more than 28 years volunteered at the Center of Activities for the Elderly, Kibrahacha. Mrs. Jose-Pimentel was not involved in the writing of this article.



### One Happy Day

**How are you doing? My name is Railynn Maria Alvarado Montilla, I am four years old, and I'm going to tell you a little bit about what I do in a day.**

Every morning at 6am, the alarm goes off for mommy and daddy get up to get ready to start the day. I don't like getting up so early, so I wrap myself in my bedcovers and keep sleeping a little longer. But by 6:30am, mommy wakes me up and daddy wakes my sibling up, so we can start preparing to go to school and learn something new.

At school I like to learn, color, sing and play with my friends. My favorite game is tag, and I also like ball games. When it's time to eat, I have to sit quietly at the table so

we can give thanks to Father God for our food, and afterwards we eat.

After school we go home, and we're allowed to rest, watch television and play. Sometimes, if it's possible, mommy and daddy take us to the park in the afternoon. We like that very very much. When it starts getting dark, we have to start preparing for bed. First we eat, and then we shower, brush our teeth and go to bed. Sometimes mommy is nice and lets us watch a bit of TV before we fall asleep.

Before we sleep, mommy tells us a story so we can fall asleep; we sleep until the sun comes out again, and so begins anew one happy day.



## March 8<sup>th</sup>

### A look in the life of a teen With all of its highs and lows



**It's undeniably fun to be a teen. These are commonly seen as some of the best years in life, and it certainly is so for female teens.**

These are the times in life for self development and self discovery. Not only is our body growing, but so are our mind and our evolving personality, along with our tastes and views on the world.

As a teen that goes to school, my days are fairly the same. I wake up at 6:30 and get ready to be at school by 7:45. One of the moments I look forward to the most every day, is the little moment I get to spend with my friends before I start the day at school. We meet up at our usual sitting spot, and talk about our previous day as well as the long day we've got ahead. For the next few hours, my main focus is surviving the day and getting home to my dogs and my TV shows.

To me, that's one of the best parts about being a teen. We have fairly simple responsibilities, and though school can be hard and overwhelming, some of us are blessed to have friends around us to make it easier to get by. We are also in the age where it's easier and more accessible to go out and try new things, experience something new every time we go out and explore who we are, even though we also face struggles as teens.

One of the things I personally struggle with the most is the pressure I feel from knowing that everything I do as a teen will affect who I am as an adult. Every decision I make, will ultimately lead to my future as an adult, and that can be very hard to deal with as a teen. On top of that, we also face judgment from fellow teens, which causes us to feel pressure about the way we dress or the way look, and even the way we act in public. We become self conscious, which can lead to a multitude of struggles, especially mentally and within ourselves.

Despite all of that, I feel very lucky to be a female teen. There are so many women around me and in the world who are constantly setting an example that as a woman there is nothing we can't accomplish. It motivates me and inspires me to grow into the best version of myself that I can be, and one day walk among the wonderful women I look up to today.

### A day in the life:

### A day in the life of a female journalist

**From Monday to Friday, mi alarm clock goes off at six in the morning so I can wake up and prepare for a new day. I check all my social media while I prepare my morning coffee and pancakes for my daughter, who is almost five years old.**

Around 7:30am, I leave the house so I can bring my daughter to school, while I listen to the morning news on the radio. As a journalist, you must always be up to date regarding news and comments from every side.

Throughout the morning I dedicate my time to writing articles about Latin America and the most important news from that region. Sometimes I also have to attend a press conference so I can write a news item for next day's newspaper.

By noon I go pick up my daughter at school, I prepare food so that together with my husband and my child we can sit down for a meal. Afterwards I go back

behind the computer and continue working.

Afternoons are the most important part, and these are dedicated to writing and producing articles, checking on social media if there are any items that are more relevant, and also call various persons involved in the news, including politicians and members of government. By the time the work day is over, which can be in the afternoon or at night, it's time for me to dedicate to my family and to myself.

The time of a journalist is always scarce, sometimes we must deliver an article in a matter of hours, because it can be a very important topic that needs to be published right away. After writing the article, the editor in chief has the duty to control that everything is well redacted and well written, so that the article can be published on social media and also appear in the next edition of the newspaper the following day.

To give commentary and information regarding everything that goes on the island is fundamental as a journalist. We must have respect for the truth, must chase objectivity – even though sometimes it is not accessible – and also must separate that which is information from that which is opinion, because a journalist must always have critical thinking.

It is a job based on values like empathy, kindness, respect and sincerity with everyone, even though there is always criticism from all sides. To work as a journalist is not a simple job, likewise, not everyone who has a camera and takes up to the streets knows what the job is all about. It's not enough to talk and give information about something that happened, but also you must have knowledge regarding the law, ethics and professionalism.

Pictured: Bon Dia Aruba journalist, Andreina Morillo.





# Workshop study choice popular with final exam students

The workshop 'Study choice information' at Colegio Arubano has been a success this past week at. Nearly 300 HAVO 5 and VWO 6 students attended the workshop during school time.

Former students of Colegio stood in front of the class and shared their experience about studying in the Netherlands. This is an initiative of the educational foundation WeConnect, which thus contributes to education choice information.

### Information

A very large proportion of these students will leave for another country in a few months' time; the choice for the Netherlands is an obvious one. Some already know for sure what they want to study and in which city, others are still unsure. "It is difficult to choose from a distance and the field of choice is complex and diverse, especially with all English-language studies in the Netherlands. Everyone should be able to ask his or her questions. So we are



happy with the demand from the schools." says WeConnect manager Tanja Fraai.

### Peers

WeConnect works with the peer-to-peer system, so the information officers are former students who went to

the Netherlands to study. The Aruban born Nanine Ponson chose Biology and Medical Laboratory Research at the Hogeschool Leiden, followed by a master's degree at the VU University in Amsterdam. "I see a young Nanine in front of me, and I can imagine how

difficult it must be to make a choice. My most important advice is not to stand still, because time certainly does not stand still."

### Empowerment

Amedee Wever studied Earth Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. "I hope that we have been able to provide insight, inspiration and practical tips and tricks that the students will take with them into the next, very exciting, chapter of their lives. They have unlimited potential, and with the right mindset they are sure to thrive." The third spokesperson, Aruban Joseph Loaiza (Tax Law, Leiden University) adds: "Believe in yourself and just go for it. Your journey is just starting. Enjoy every moment." All three have since returned to their native island as young professionals.

### Need

At Colegio people are happy with the information provided by WeConnect. Dean Richeilla Wijngaarde: "As a dean, I think it is important that our students

are well informed and prepared for their further education and further life abroad. We are very grateful to WeConnect for their time, energy and the information they have provided to our students."

### Follow-up

It makes you want more, those workshops, as the survey among the students showed afterwards. They also indicated that they would like to talk to Arubans who are already studying in the Netherlands. Studies such as Biology and Medical Laboratory Research, International Business and Law are popular. "The students want more information about housing, life-work balance, study pressure, mental health, budgeting and how to deal with Dutch culture." Tanja Fraai explains. WeConnect has offered to facilitate these virtual conversations. All workshops are hosted by Rachel Hughes, the local WeConnect coordinator on the island. The workshop has been running for some time at Colegio Nigel Matthew in San Nicolas. □

## Medlab Aruba 'fit-2-fly': Covid-19 testing on the island

**NOORD — While on vacation, the last thing you need to worry about is what to do or where to go for your COVID-19 testing. Many countries, including the U.S. require for all passengers heading back home to present with a negative test result for PCR or Antigen 72 hours prior to departure.**

MEDLAB Aruba is an accredited ISO 15189:2012 OGA-LE 23-08 laboratory with over 30 years of experience on the island. The laboratory complies with the Department of Public Health of Aruba, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for COVID -19 testing. MEDLAB Aruba has been assigned as one of the private laboratories authorized to perform "Fit-2-Fly" testing for departing passengers. Hassle free scheduling – QR-code The laboratory has invested on the only fully integrated digital booking platform on the island that allows guests to pre-register for the

testing prior to coming to Aruba and have all their information incorporated upon entry to any of the available testing centers. Guests will receive a confirmation email with QR-code that will be requested upon day of testing to facilitate a faster turn-around time for your results.

### Testing options

Offering three method of testing gives you, our island visitors, the possibility to choose which service is at your convenience. Recommended time to complete test prior to departure is 48 (72) hours. We also request for you to bring your passport to the appointment. Testing Option 1: Walk-In service at our location in Noord Medical Center (NMC), Noord 63 or at Superfood COVID Testing Center. You may also book online at WWW.COVIDARUBA.COM and choose location. Testing Option 2: On-site at participating hotels. Only guests staying



on these properties will be allowed to conduct the test. Appointment is also made online at WWW.COVIDARUBA.COM.

The participating hotels with testing facilities are Aruba Marriott Resort (Stellaris, Ocean and Surf Club), Holiday Inn, Playa Linda Beach Resort, RIU Antillas, RIU Palace, Eagle Resort, Costa Linda Beach Resort, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Manchebo Beach Resort, Casa del Mar & Aruba Beach Club, Caribbean Palm Village. Testing Option 3: Airbnb/ Other hotel location. We come to you for the test together with our vehicular Mobile Health Test Unit. We require a minimum of six people for this service. Request/ Book appointment through WhatsApp number +297 5975548.

### Price

Offering a great rate for the testing. The Antigen test is at \$50 and the PCR at \$100. Payment method is card (preferred), cash (hygiene measures).

The COVID Test is not covered by the Aruba Visitor's Insurance, but you are able to seek reimbursement once back home.

### Results

Turn-around time for results is within 24 hours. Result is sent electronically to your email (check spam/junk folder)

For more information visit [www.covidaruba.com](http://www.covidaruba.com), call us at +297 5975548 or email us at [covid@lab.aw](mailto:covid@lab.aw). □

# U.S. gasoline prices rise again on talk of banning Russian oil

By **DAVID KOENIG**  
AP Business Writer

Gasoline prices are pushing even farther above \$4 a gallon, the highest price that American motorists have faced since July 2008, as calls grow to ban imports of Russian oil.

Prices at the pump were rising long before Russia invaded Ukraine and have spiraled faster since the start of the war. The U.S. national average for a gallon of gasoline has soared 45 cents a gallon in the past week and topped \$4.06 on Monday, according to auto club AAA.

"I am looking at the possibility of walking to work," said Asiya Joseph, who had just paid \$4.29 a gallon at a BP station in Brooklyn, New York. "This is the first time that I am filling up my tank in like, 10 days."

The price of regular broke \$4 a gallon on Sunday for the first time in nearly 14 years and is now up nearly 50% from a year ago.

The price is even higher in Europe, averaging 1.75 euros per liter last week, according to the European Commission, the equivalent of \$7.21 per gallon.

GasBuddy, which tracks prices down to the service-station level, said Monday that the U.S. was likely to



Gas prices are displayed at gas stations in Englewood, N.J., Monday, March 7, 2022.

Associated Press

break its record price of \$4.10 a gallon, but that does not account for inflation. In today's terms, the record price would be equal to about \$5.24 after accounting for inflation.

"Forget the \$4 per gallon mark, the nation will soon set new all-time record highs and we could push closer to a national average of \$4.50," said GasBuddy analyst Patrick De Haan. "We've never been in this situation before, with this level of uncertainty. ... Americans will be feeling

the pain of the rise in prices for quite some time."

Energy prices are contributing to the worst inflation that Americans have seen in 40 years, far outpacing higher wages. Consumer prices jumped 7.5% in January, compared with a year earlier, and analysts predict a 7.9% increase when the government reports February figures later this week.

Oil prices soared early Monday before retreating. Benchmark U.S. crude surged to \$130 a barrel overnight, then moderated

to around \$119, a 3% gain, in afternoon trading. The international price skyrocketed to \$139 before falling back to about \$123 a barrel. Major U.S. stock indexes were down more than 2%. The United States is the world's largest oil producer — ahead of Saudi Arabia and Russia — but it is also the biggest oil consumer, and it can't meet that staggering demand with domestic crude alone.

The U.S. imported 245 million barrels of oil from Russia last year — about 8% of all

U.S. oil imports — up from 198 million barrels in 2020. That's less than the U.S. gets from Canada or Mexico but more than it imported last year from Saudi Arabia. The increasingly violent Russian attack on Ukraine has increased calls to cut off Russia from the money it gets from oil and natural gas exports. Europe is heavily dependent on Russian gas.

President Joe Biden has been reluctant to ban Russian oil, fearing it could further fuel inflation heading into the midterm elections this November.

Many Republicans and a growing number of Democrats in the House and Senate, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have endorsed banning Russian crude as a way to put more pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin. The White House hasn't ruled out a ban, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Sunday that the United States and its allies were discussing a ban "while making sure that there is still an appropriate supply of oil" on the world market.

Talk of a ban on Russian oil has led U.S. officials to consider other sources that are currently limited. □

# Mastercard, Visa suspend operations in Russia after invasion

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Mastercard and Visa are suspending their operations in Russia, the companies said Saturday, in the latest blow to the country's financial system after its invasion of Ukraine.

Mastercard said cards issued by Russian banks will no longer be supported by its network and any Mastercard issued outside the country will not work at Russian stores or ATMs.

"We don't take this decision lightly," Mastercard said in a statement, adding that it made the move after discussions with customers, partners and governments. Visa said it's working with clients and partners in Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming

days.

"We are compelled to act following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and the unacceptable events that we have witnessed," Visa Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Al Kelly said in a statement. The twin suspensions were announced within 16 minutes of each other, and they followed a private video call earlier in the day between President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and U.S. lawmakers. During that conversation, Zelenskyy "asked us to turn off MasterCard and Visa for Russia," Rep. Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, tweeted. "I agree," he added, before Mastercard and Visa made their an-

nouncements.

Earlier in the week, Visa and Mastercard had announced more limited moves to block financial institutions from the networks that serve as arteries for the payments system. Russian people have already been hit hard by heavy sanctions and financial penalties imposed by the U.S. government and others.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the value of the Russian currency, the ruble, has plunged by more than a third to a record low. That's pushing up inflation for Russian households, and all the fear has helped cause long lines at ATMs. Many other companies around the world have also made moves to increase



In this July 5, 2018 photo, women wearing traditional head dresses wait to greet Visa cardholders who won trips to the 2018 soccer World Cup, at the Marriott Novy Arbat Hotel, taken over by Visa for the duration of the World Cup in Moscow, Russia.

Associated Press

the financial pressure on Russia and its people because of its attack on Ukraine. Some are selling their stakes in Russian com-

panies, such as energy giant BP, while others like Harley-Davidson halted product shipments to the country. □

**CROSSWORD**

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 2 Quarter-back Manning
  - 7 Hunted animal
  - 11 Go by
  - 12 Bee's home
  - 13 Louisa May Alcott book
  - 15 Car type
  - 16 Fishing need
  - 18 Tiara adorners
  - 21 Small seabird
  - 22 "Forget it!"
  - 24 "Exodus" hero
  - 25 Try for office
  - 26 Put down
  - 27 Tyrant
  - 29 Quite uncommon
  - 30 Time in office
  - 31 Egg layers
  - 32 Man of morals
  - 34 1980 Fellini film
  - 40 Land unit
  - 41 Sea rover
  - 42 Keg contents
  - 43 Notice
- DOWN**
- 1 Singer Tormé

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Yesterday's answer

- 20 Battle souvenirs
- 21 Wee bit
- 22 Pistachio or pecan
- 23 Retina setting
- 25 Juliet's love
- 28 Grace, for one
- 29 School paper
- 31 TV's Mandel
- 33 Dirty Harry's org.
- 34 Truck part
- 35 Glacier makeup
- 36 Uno plus due
- 37 West of films
- 38 Series-ending abbr.
- 39 Tennis need

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A X Y D L B A A X R  
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

**3-8 CRYPTOQUOTE**

OB KOV OB U`X RYQRIVQIW.  
"EZYX" UB O EYVW SZOS EOB  
UQGIQSIW SY XOI I GIVPYQI  
BYCQW FUJ I O NCSFIV.

— ROFGUQ SVUFFUQ  
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE WAY I SEE IT, IF YOU WANT THE RAINBOW, YOU GOTTA PUT UP WITH THE RAIN. DOLLY PARTON

**Pokemon Go creator thinks metaverse needs to keep it 'real'**



This photo provided by Niantic Labs in February 2022 shows the company's CEO John Hanke.

Associated Press

**SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP)** — Niantic Labs CEO John Hanke has been working on technology that helps people navigate and enjoy places in the real world since he helped create Google Maps nearly 20 years ago. So it's not surprising that he isn't a fan of the current hyperbole surrounding the notion that technology is poised to hatch a "metaverse" — a three-dimensional simulation of the actual world populated by digital avatars of ourselves gathering with friends, family and colleagues to play, work and experience other aspects of an artificial life so compelling that it feels real. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is such an ardent fan of a concept that he hails as an "embodied internet" that he recently renamed his company Meta. Hanke, though, fears Zuckerberg's vision would become more like a "dystopian nightmare." Hanke instead is hoping to build technology that meshes with the physical world — an approach known as "augmented reality," or AR. That's what Niantic Labs has already done

with Pokemon Go, a popular mobile phone game that deploys AR to enable people to chase digital creatures while roaming through neighborhoods, parks and elsewhere. He recently discussed his hopes for what he calls a "real world" metaverse with The Associated Press.

**Q: What bothers you the most about Mark Zuckerberg's push to create a metaverse?**

**A:** I feel like people just have it wrong, thinking the future is people logging into a 3D world and walking around as avatars. I do not believe that is the future of technology and certainly not the future of humanity. I think it was a weird reaction to COVID in a way, with people sheltering at home, watching a lot of Netflix, getting a lot of delivery food, and kids living on Roblox a lot. If you look at technology and where it was headed pre-pandemic, it was all about mobile app stuff that you could take with you wherever you are. You are out with your kids, you are out there doing stuff in the world and it's helping you get there with Google

Maps, it's helping you to eat with Yelp, it's helping you find the hotel you are going to stay in. It was that kind of tech helping you as a human do human stuff better.

**Q: So you think the metaverse should head more in that direction?**

**A:** When we think about the real world metaverse, we think about reality channels. The real world metaverse is rooted in what we do today, but it's an evolutionary step toward some of the same ideas that some people talk about the metaverse. □

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**Editor**  
**Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.**  
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**Assistant Director**

Xiomara Arends

**Editors**

Pilar Flores

Liza Koolman (Management assistant)

Richard Brooks

**Sales**

Liza Koolman

Sulaika Croes

**Classifieds**

classified@cspnv.com

**Distribution and Collection**

accounting@bondia.com

**Social / Website**

Juan Luis Pinto

**Columnists**

Anthony Croes

Weststraat 22

T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

W: www.arubatoday.com

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# Dolly Parton, James Patterson — in words and music

By **HILLEL ITALIE**  
**LA VERGNE, Tennessee (AP)**

— Sometimes even Dolly Parton has a hard time keeping up with the legend of Dolly Parton.

"I often go into my museum in Dollywood, you know, because I'm in the mood to be there or we're in there doing something or putting something new in. And I look at all that stuff and think 'When, how did that happen?'" she says. "I shake my head when I see, like a documentary or something. I think how did I do all that, how did I get all that done?"

The singer, songwriter, actor and philanthropist is speaking from another wing of her empire, one of two sound stages at a 7,200-square foot studio complex outside of Nashville, with assistants and technicians moving about and Parton herself in a characteristically cheerful mood on an otherwise overcast afternoon. Seated next to her — and wearing a dark tuxedo jacket touched with black and red to match the pattern of her dress — is a novelist as prolific in his field as she is in songwriting, James Patterson.

He is among the best selling authors in history and, like Parton, a champion of literacy programs. He is 74 and has written or co-written hundreds of books. She is 76 and has written



**Author James Patterson appears at an event to promote his novel in New York on June 5, 2018, left, and Dolly Parton performs in concert on July 31, 2015, in Nashville, Tenn.**

**Associated Press**

thousands of songs. Until a couple of years ago, they were mutual admirers who had never met. Now, they have completed a novel that comes out this week, "Run, Rose, Run," an Amazon.com bestseller even before publication and the rare work of fiction to arrive with an accompanying soundtrack.

"He'd give me ideas for the songs. I gave him ideas that he expanded on for the characters and incorporated in the book," says Parton, whose "Run, Rose, Run" album includes 12 new songs. "So it really was a magical team."

The collaboration began as just one of countless ideas for Patterson, who reliably turns out several books a year, from children's stories to a biography of the Kennedys to two best-selling thrillers written with former President Bill Clinton. Patterson spent a lot of time in Nashville in the 1960s while attending Vanderbilt University and thought of an archetypal story — a young, promising and frightened country singer, AnnieLee Keyes, facing a "million to one odds," and her bond with a retired country superstar, Ruthanna Ryder.

As Patterson and Parton both recall, Patterson contacted Parton's team and the two soon spoke in Nashville.

"We liked each other right away. And we kind of made the deal right there — no lawyers. We didn't want anybody in the way," Patterson says.

"Run, Rose, Run" is a close look at the Nashville music scene, through the eyes of women. The narrative has music and romance and cheering crowds, and lyrics to Parton songs such as the mid-tempo rocker "Big Dreams and Faded Jeans." On the darker side

are unscrupulous executives, unwanted physical advances and the male-oriented ways of the market, defined by a radio consultant's "salad" theory, in which men are the essential artists, "the lettuce," the women more like tomatoes, "to be sprinkled into airplay now and again as garnish."

Parton, who famously rose from a cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee to international acclaim, says her back story differs from AnnieLee's. But she did endure "having bad managers and having to, you know, just squirm, trying to get out of situations." AnnieLee's struggles to take control of her career reminded Parton of her early work with Porter Wagoner, who helped her break through professionally in 1967 when he brought her on to his popular television show. They recorded and toured together for seven years, their battles well publicized, before she announced her departure. The end of their working partnership inspired her classic "I Will Always Love You."

"Oh God, I used to fight all the time with Porter Wagoner," she says of the late singer, who died in 2007. "We were known for, you know, for our disagreements. But he gave me a big hand up and I always appreciated that. □"



**Philadelphia poet laureate Sonia Sanchez looks on during a news conference in Philadelphia on Dec. 29, 2011.**

**Associated Press**

## Poet Sonia Sanchez to receive Edwin MacDowell Medal

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The poet, activist and educator Sonia Sanchez is this year's winner of the Edward MacDowell Medal, a lifetime achievement honor started in 1960 and previously given to Robert Frost, Toni Morrison and Stephen Sondheim among others.

"I had tears in my eyes as I learned about this award," Sanchez, 87, said in a statement released Sunday by MacDowell. "When I consider my dear

friend, Sister Toni (Morrison), and so many others who have been given this award, I feel so welcomed to be part of that group. It is a great honor to be this year's awardee. MacDowell has such a great herstory and history of caring and concern for artists; it is a joy this place exists to keep the world on a path toward re-civilization, peace, and humanity."

MacDowell is an artist residency founded in 1907, with fellows over the past

century including James Baldwin, Leonard Bernstein, Louise Erdrich and Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Sanchez was a prominent figure in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and is known for such poetry collections as "Homegirls and Handgrenades" and "Shake Loose My Skin."

Novelist Walter Mosley will present Sanchez her medal on July 10 on the MacDowell grounds in Peterborough, New Hampshire,

the first in-person ceremony since 2019, the year before the pandemic.

"Sonia Sanchez's illustrious career spans seven decades. Her commanding oeuvre continues to elevate language's ability to give voice to entire communities (their daily pleasures and pains) inside our shared and troubled history," poet and playwright Claudia Rankine, chair of this year's MacDowell Medal selection panel, said in a statement. □

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## Rift appears to widen between two women's pro hockey groups

By JOHN WAWROW  
AP Hockey Writer

Hockey Hall of Fame member Angela James opened what could become a widening rift between North America's top two women's professional hockey organizations on the eve of joining the new ownership group of the Premier Hockey Federation's Toronto Six. Days before the PHF officially announced the sale on Monday, James posted a lengthy note on a Facebook group page in which she accused the Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association of stunting the sport's development because of its refusal to join forces. Her message drew more attention when Six player Saroya Tinker re-posted it on her Twitter account. "Right now, I'm so disap-



The National Women's Hockey League logo is seen along the boards during a playoff game between the Toronto Six and Boston Pride, Friday, March 26, 2021, in Boston.

Associated Press

pointed in the PWHPA. Who's interests are you protecting?" James wrote. "Why can't you work out

these differences instead of suppressing and handcuffing the elite women's athletes in the progress

of the pro game already made," she added. "Women's hockey is bigger than the PHF and the PWHPA,

together we can make history."

James, a Six assistant coach this season, said she was speaking on her own and did not note she was part of the group buying the Toronto franchise.

The ownership group also includes former NHL coach Ted Nolan, former NHL player Anthony Stewart and Bernice Carnegie, co-chair of the Carnegie Initiative, which was established to promote inclusiveness in hockey.

James' criticism drew a response from PWHPA adviser Liz Knox. Without referencing James, Knox tweeted Sunday that "management, coaches, front office (etc) speaking on behalf of players' experience instead of supporting the true voice of the players is exactly why the PWHPA was formed." □

## Colts establish coaching fellowship in Tony Dungy's honor

**INDIANAPOLIS (AP)** — The Indianapolis Colts have established the Tony Dungy Diversity Fellowship to advance the opportunities for football coaching candidates.

The program in honor of the Pro Football Hall of Fame coach, announced Monday by the Irsay family that owns the Colts, will provide the team with access to talented coaches while fostering and expanding the team's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Dungy is one of the sport's most outspoken voices on the need for more diversity and inclu-

sion.

"I am thrilled that the Colts are seeking to help build diversity and inclusion in NFL coaching by launching this diversity fellowship coaching program," Dungy said. "It's a tremendous honor for me to be identified with the program. I applaud the Irsay family and the organization for taking this proactive step, and I hope it encourages other teams to look for ways to promote equal opportunities in the coaching ranks."

Qualified candidates will be evaluated and interviewed by a selection

committee composed of Dungy, the Irsay family, Colts general manager Chris Ballard and coach Frank Reich, and other members of the organization. As a part of the program, the Colts will hire a Dungy Fellow for the offense and the defense.

"We're humbled and honored that Tony Dungy's trailblazing accomplishments are also a part of our rich Colts history," Jim Irsay said, "but none of us can afford to rest on our laurels when it comes to advancing fairness and opportunity in the NFL's coaching ranks." □



Former Indianapolis Colts' head coach Tony Dungy is honored during halftime of an NFL football game between the Colts and the Pittsburgh Steelers on Thursday, Nov. 24, 2016, in Indianapolis.

Associated Press

# NASCAR's new Next Gen car delivers on race track

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — NASCAR's underdogs will have a fighting chance in the Next Gen car, according to the development plan for the ballyhooed new model, and the racing would be much better. New car configurations would force drivers to muscle the cars like never before.

Well, four races into the new season on four entirely different circuits, NASCAR seems to have actually delivered on the promise.

Sure, the top teams have still won all the races. First it was Team Penske with back-to-back wins in the exhibition Busch Clash and Daytona 500, and then Hendrick Motorsports made consecutive trips to victory lane in California and Las Vegas.

"You're never going to shut down the giant race teams, right?" Hendrick driver Alex Bowman said after his Sunday victory at Las Vegas. Perhaps not. But the little guys sure are much improved:

— Ross Chastain led a total of 75 laps through the first 117 races of his career. At Las Vegas, Chastain led a race-high 83 laps and



An official restarts the race after a caution flag during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race Sunday, March 6, 2022, in Las Vegas.

finished third. TrackHouse Racing teammate Daniel Suarez flirted with his first career Cup Series win a week earlier at California before finishing fourth.

— Erik Jones showed that Richard Petty's old No. 43 can still be competitive by qualifying second at California, leading laps and finishing third. The rebranded Petty GMS Racing team

has expanded to two cars this season and Ty Dillon has been mid-pack.

— Richard Childress Racing, the first team to embrace the Next Gen concept and help NASCAR create the first prototypes, has shown dramatic improvement. Tyler Reddick has contended everywhere and Austin Dillon has a pair of runner-up finishes in four races.

— Jack Roush's rebranded RFK Racing team with Brad Keselowski part of the ownership group went back to victory lane for the first time since 2017 when Keselowski and Chris Buescher each won a Daytona 500 qualifying race.

— Aric Almirola is the only driver to notch three top-10 finishes through the first three points races, while 25 different drivers have led at least one lap this season. Christopher Bell won his first career pole at Las Vegas, and annual title contenders Kevin Harvick and Denny Hamlin have plummeted in the standings; Hamlin heads to Phoenix this weekend ranked 30th in points. The Next Gen has so far raced on the smallest circuit possible — the quarter-mile track inside Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum for the exhibition Clash — and one of the the largest, the 2.5-mile superspeedway at Daytona International Speedway. The race at 2-mile Auto Club Speedway was the best at the California track in years, and same can be said for Sunday's race at 1.5-mile Las Vegas circuit.

Las Vegas featured 23 lead changes among 15 drivers and an overtime finish in which Bowman raced teammate and reigning

Cup champion Kyle Larson door-to-door for the win.

Hall of Fame driver Jeff Gordon, now the vice chairman at Hendrick Motorsports, called the opening month of racing "refreshing" as NASCAR produced a car that has so far lived up to its hype.

"I think we've seen great racing. I think we've seen cars coming from the back to the front, front to the back. We've seen where they can race hard," Gordon said. "But the cars are on the edge. The drivers are definitely having to show their talent and ability. I think that was the intent, too, was to have a car that was on a more level playing field."

An aerodynamic package that features lower downforce and higher horsepower has been a handful for drivers throughout the field, with Larson complaining after his runner-up finish in Las Vegas that his upper arms were the sorest they'd been in his entire driving career.

"I'm out there holding a death grip on the steering wheel for four hours, just trying to hang on," Larson said. "The car is actually really fun to drive."

The Next Gen still has plenty of kinks, starting with a parts shortage that has left teams scrambling for backup cars. Joe Gibbs Racing did not have a race-ready backup in Las Vegas and spent more than eight hours preparing a "parts car" for Kyle Busch after he crashed his primary in practice.

The car has had difficulty getting back to pit road with a flat tire and wreckers were on standby all over the track at Las Vegas to give a push when needed. Toyota worked out an overheating problem between California and Las Vegas, and teams, manufacturers and even the drivers are learning things each week. Joey Logano, winner of the Clash, suggested NASCAR employ AAA-style service trucks that can rush out to a disabled racecar and do a quick tire change to speed up the process. □

## Judo federation removes titles from Putin, Russian oligarch



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and British Prime Minister David Cameron watch the judo during the men's 100-kg judo competition at the 2012 Summer Olympics, Aug. 2, 2012, in London.

Associated Press

**BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP)** — The International Judo Federation has removed the

titles and jobs Vladimir Putin and a long-time Kremlin-supporting oligarch held at

the organization.

"The International Judo Federation announces that Mr. Vladimir Putin and Mr. Arkady Rotenberg have been removed from all positions held in the International Judo Federation," the Budapest-based governing body said in a statement late Sunday. Putin's honorary presidency of the IJF was suspended last week with the organization citing "the ongoing war conflict in Ukraine." The Russian president is an avid judoka and attended the sport at the 2012 London Olympics. Rotenberg is a long-time friend of Putin from their home city of St. Petersburg and was a member of the IJF executive committee as "development manager."